

Moderator: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome and thank you for joining today's teleconference, PIDB Public Meeting. Please note that all lines will be muted for the duration of the call. With that, I turn the call over to Mark Bradley. Please go ahead.

Mr. Bradley: Thank you so much, Lindsay. Good morning, everyone. I'm Mark A. Bradley, Director of the Information Security Oversight Office. I also serve as the Executive Secretary of the Public Interest Declassification Board. My staff is responsible for providing administrative and logistical support to the Board. On behalf of David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, the staff at the National Archives, and my ISOO colleagues, welcome and thank you for joining us in this public meeting of the Public Interest Declassification Board. As we discuss the critically important challenge to modernize all the classification and declassification system, you can imagine we would have much preferred to have held this meeting in person, but your safety and ours come first.

Let me go over just a few housekeeping items how this meeting is going to run. To be sure the meeting is going to go smoothly, we're not all going to call in at once. We're going to have a, not a hierarchy, but an order of the speakers. Judge James Baker is our acting Chair. He will speak first. He'll kick off with a summary of the report and what he thinks needs to be highlighted. He's then going to have each one of our members speak. We have five in total. After all the members speak, we've asked Steve Aftergood from the Federation of American Scientists to provide commentary on the recommendations of the report.

If at any time you have questions or comments, we ask you to email them to pidb@nara.gov. Again, that's pidb@nara.gov. We have staff checking this account throughout the program and are hoping you will send in your questions and comments. When Robert Fahs on my staff reads the comments, he is going to do so anonymously. You will not be identified by your name or position. We're going to allot about 25 minutes for the question and answer session. We look very much forward to active participation.

At the end of this meeting, we're going to post all the questions or comments on the PIDB Transforming Classification blog. No questions will go unanswered. Anyway, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Judge Baker, acting chair of the PIDB. Judge.

Judge Baker: Thank you very much, Mark. I am the vice Chair, which makes me the acting Chair. On behalf of the PIDB team, by which I mean all the members and the staff, welcome. We wish you and your loved ones, good health. I would like to offer a special welcome to David Skaggs. David is a Marine, a farmer, a former Member of Congress and a

three-term member of this Board. He's also a constitutional patriot. I would also like to offer special thanks on behalf of the Board to Steve Aftergood for his willingness to comment on the report as part of this program. As people on this call will likely know, the Board's legislative authorization expired at the end of 2018. However, the Board was subsequently reauthorized in a retroactive manner with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020 and we resumed our work in January.

The current legislation states that the Board shall meet in person not less than quarterly, which we are pleased to be doing today. A little less pleased because we're doing it on a phone, but pleased that we're doing it. The lapse in authority had several effects. One is it delayed the issuance of our report, and it has also brought some of the Board members to the end of our terms. As a result, what we're going to do today is we're going to introduce our report and then we're going to, at the same time, give our outgoing Board members an opportunity to say anything they would like about their time on the Board, the agenda of the Board, or anything else.

One of our colleagues by the way is concluding 14 years of continued dedicated service on the Board and as an expert Emeritus consultant to the Board, more on him in that later. Let me start then by briefly introducing the report almost in checklist manner, I will then make just a few comments. Then each of our members will provide more detail and expertise about a specific topic.

The report might be summarized as moving from an analog to a digital classification system, or if one's a little more sarcastic, you could say, "Welcome to the 21st century." Those more sarcastic might say, "Welcome to the 20th century." The report is all about bringing technology systems and systems approaches and risk management to the classification and declassification world. In the cover letter that Trevor Morrison and I sent to the president with the report, we highlighted some of the benefits of improving the classification system.

In government, as you know, we're always looking for win-win opportunities, places where everybody can get something out of what the agenda offers. We highlighted in our cover letter the cost savings that comes from fixing the system and efficiency issues. If you each could spare some time, I know that each of the Board members will regale you with horror stories about the classification and declassification process.

A new modern reporting system will provide credibility, and most importantly, it will provide improved and better public access to knowledge about the government. As you all know, it's challenging

to get the government to address these issues, issues that have upfront costs that have to be paid before you get to the back-end benefits and savings. That's a challenge. It is also a challenging issue because it takes leadership to drive bureaucracies and to make cultural change.

That is a lot of what this is about. Not just changes in the executive order, but making cultural changes. To be honest, many senior leaders who could affect that change do not make this a priority. That's why we have highlighted some of the security and cost benefits in the report, as well as the benefits to public access. These are some of the recommendations in the report about which you will hear shortly.

We have proposed that there be an Executive Agent and an Executive Committee to drive the reform of the classification and the declassification system. Admiral Studeman will talk about a "system of systems" approach to declassification and classification. You'll hear about increasing the authority of the National Declassification Center's authority and the critical role for the use of technology, connecting agencies - and especially the National Declassification Center - in a secure manner that will greatly make the declassification process much more efficient.

You'll hear about prioritizing declassification projects focusing on those that are of most interest to historians, as well as the public. You'll hear about new models for measuring the cost of classification and a recommendation for a two-tier system of classification. As everyone on this call knows, declassification is important and is hard work, which usually goes uncelebrated. Proper declassification as part of public disclosure is essential to what it means to live and work in a functional democracy.

Public disclosure is also good for national security by articulating to the public, what the government is doing, why it is doing it, and then subjecting those actions to public scrutiny and comments. It's all the better if this occurs sooner than 25 years rather than later, that is why I joined the Board. However, I enjoyed the Board for two reasons. First, any job that allows you to sit near or next to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence is a good job and a constant reminder of why rule of law and moral courage matter. When we used to hold our Board meetings, I would pretend to go to the bathroom and then I just go downstairs and hang out with the Constitution.

Second, serving on the Board allowed me to spend time with a remarkable set of public servants who reminded me every day of the promise of government and public service. They also reminded

me, frankly, of what Adlai Stevenson once said about patriotism, that it is not frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the steady dedication of a lifetime. That's my bit. I now want to introduce you to some of the remarkable public servants I was talking about starting with my Chair, the former Chair from 2016 to 2018, Trevor Morrison, who is Dean of the New York University Law School. One of the great law schools in the United States. Trevor.

Mr. Morrison:

Thank you, Jamie, and good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us in the less than optimal circumstances. We are glad to be able to have this public meeting and to present our report. I will at this stage, just say a few quick things echoing really what Jamie had said already, which is that it's been a tremendous honor for me to serve on this Board.

Just as Jamie said, I admire the public service dedication of the members and the staff. And I appreciate their devotion to the PIDB's charter and responsibilities. I'm very proud that we've been able to work together to generate this report, which addresses a really important set of issues.

In particular, I think there is recognition that declassification reform and its effectiveness cannot be achieved without thinking hard about how the process of classification needs to be reformed and understanding that neither of those can be done effectively without an investment in advanced technology that is sorely needed.

In order to accomplish all of that, there really does need to be a centralized commitment across government. Our report detailed that basic point. That contained many of the elements that have just been outlined by Jamie and that we'll be discussing over the course of the meeting. I'll leave my introductory remarks there and I might come back on some of the particular points as we go through the report. Thank you, Jamie.

Judge Baker:

You're welcome. Thank you. Next up is Ken Wainstein. Ken.

Mr. Wainstein:

Hi, Jamie. Yes, I'm here. I'm just looking up an Adlai Stevenson quote that I can match you with, but couldn't find one. Great remarks by both you and Trevor, and it's good to be here with everybody. I just wanted to speak to a couple aspects of the report. First on one of the particular recommendations in the report; and then second, I want to address what is my pet issue, which is over-classification. Of course over-classification is part and parcel of the objective of declassification. If we don't classify it in the first place, then the challenges of declassification are not there. We need to find ways to address over-classification as we go in the future.

First, I just want to talk about one of the main recommendations of the report, which was to appoint an Executive Agent, whose role will be to oversee and lead efforts to modernize classification and declassification. As you recall from reviewing the report, we recommend that the President appoint an Executive Agent and that it be the DNI. This is a perennial issue. Whenever you identify a critical issue where many different agencies have equities in or a role in addressing, there's always a challenge of how do we coordinate all those agency efforts, get everybody working the same direction and actually accomplish something and make progress.

We see that in cyber issues as cyber extends over numerous different agencies portfolios. I see it in bio-defense as I serve on the bio-defense commission. Of course, that is something that we are seeing play out now with the COVID crisis, the coordination among different agencies. Whenever we wrestle with something like that, we think, "Okay, what's the best way to try to centralize authority within the government to make sure that there is a person and/or agency that can make all the other agencies work in unison." Here, I think that that need is particularly acute and probably for obvious reasons.

We are dealing with classification and declassification systems across numerous agencies. We're dealing with different agencies' cultures, and expectations about classification that have developed over decades within that agency, oftentimes unaffected by the cultures of other agencies. You have different classification guides for each agency. I can remember there were a countless number of classification guides throughout the Federal government, none of which had been harmonized with each other when they shared the same type of information. If there really is going to be an overall effort of the type that we're recommending, you have the need for the agency or an entity that has budgetary authority that can advocate for a budget for this effort, and this will be costly. As Jamie said, on the front end, it's going to be a costly investment.

It's more than going to pay off on the back end. When the desire is to have results, now these are going to be results of the future. I think I say this a lot but we need to make the financial investment on prep and we need somebody who's empowered to advocate for that budget and then to coordinate the allocation of the budget. As you're going to hear later, I think there's also, this is a matter of trying to build a system of systems. Obviously, you're going to have one system that harmonizes all the other systems; you will need somebody who has the authority to pull those systems together. That's the rationale behind our recommendation for Executive Agent. Look, this is what Jamie, and I, and others who'd been in the

inter-agency process in different capacities over the years have witnessed.

We've really wrestled with how to get different parts of the government to work together. We think that until we have somebody- like an agency head - that's empowered to do this and to get all the relevant Federal actors working together. Until that happens, we're not going to make progress. Hence, our recommendation. I want to just take a minute to discuss my pet topic, which is over-classification. We are the declassification board. We have "declassification" in our title. We focus on that, but we always need to keep an eye on over-classification in the first place. I think we all understand the reasons for it as well as the magnitude of the problem. I don't buy into the idea that over-classification is a result of a conscious effort on the part of any government employees to try to hide embarrassing information, or that kind of thing.

It happens. But that's not really the reason for over-classification. It is simply the default position. It is safer to classify than to not classify. There are no incentive schemes in place right now. Agency culture does not encourage non-classification, they encourage classification. As a result, we reduce transparency. That is critical to our democracy. That is critical to congressional oversight. That is critical for the American public to have confidence in its Government and to minimize cynicism. Frankly, over-classification encourages leaks. The more that we classify, especially unnecessarily, the more people think or feel empowered to leak, and leak what is truly important, sensitive information. As a result, I think we, as part of this project and as part of this overall effort, we think that there are a number of things that we should be focusing on to reduce over-classification.

Whether it's typing up the criteria for classification, revising the incentives that are applied to classifiers, once again, the Board recommended these spot audits to help identify over-classification, a number of things that can be done. However, it requires a leader who has the authority to push reforms like this throughout the Government. I think this Executive Agent recommendation will be very helpful in terms of trying to instill a new culture and new processes that will reduce decisions to classify in the first instance, or reduce the volume of information that is over-classified, or classified for too long. Jamie, thank you very much, those are my two cents. Back to you.

Judge Baker:

Thank you, Ken. I realized as I was teaming up the members of the Board to speak that there was a challenge in what to say about

them. I've just done a quick calculation in my head, which in my case meant I had to get my fingers out that the Board has well over 150 years of Government experience and were I to recite that experience for each person, that would take up the entirety of the session.

That would be a filibuster strategy, but not consistent with public disclosure. One reason Ken knows so much about the importance of having an Executive Agent is because he served in so many different leadership roles in Government, most recently as Homeland Security Advisor for President Bush. John Tierney, an 11-term Member of Congress from Massachusetts will speak next. John.

Congressman Tierney:

Thank you, Jamie. I want to welcome everybody here this morning. It's nice to know so many people responded to the meeting notice and are interested in the need to modernize the classification and declassification system. It's been an honor to serve on this Board with Jamie, Trevor, Ken, Alyssa, Bill Studeman, Laura and David Skagg. They have given their time and energy to address these important matters. It makes being a member that much less of a burden and more of a pleasure. The Board's work is important to our national security and our democracy. I think that the classification, declassification systems are at a breaking point. I think many people would agree. It's not effective. It's not efficient, it costs far too much. It's too old. It can't adequately aid today's national security missions.

Nor can it handle the volume of digital information, both the existing digital information and new digital data that's increasing at an exponential rate. In our report, we recommend new policies and processes that use technology to automate decisions - and can handle the exponential growth in electronic data. Obviously, the topic of what's classified and the degree of classification that Ken was talking about is a deep concern., I know Steve Aftergood is always interested in that as well. Over-classification needs a lot more attention. We believe automating decisions will help address this problem.

Overclassification is something that people will remain interested in and will pursue. In my own experience, nine terms in Congress serving in oversight positions and working on both the Intelligence Committee and the oversight committee looking at national security issues, way too much information is either insufficiently classified, misclassified or over-classified. It is that way - just as Ken cited - just because that's the way that the arrow points and the easiest way.

Sometimes, and too often in my estimation, it's the culture of secrecy for secrecy's sake. People classify just because they don't

want others to know. They think it's too early for them to know or too much for them to know. It's entirely frustrating when I was serving on a committee or a sub-committee and doing oversight or exploring a notion for budgetary purposes or policy decisions to then have somebody ask that we duck into a classified session only to learn that the information disclosed there really was not classified and should be public, but now we're handcuffed.

As we conducted the research on this report, we learned that many agencies and offices within agencies don't really have any secure electronic means to communicate with one another. It's a challenge that is particularly widespread, especially for the officers responsible for processing public access requests, like the Freedom of Information Act and for the National Archives, which manages the National Declassification Center and classified records of the Presidential Libraries. When reviewing records for declassification at these agencies, the lack of secure connectivity makes an already cumbersome process even more so and adds additional time. For instance, to complete a review of a multi-equity classified record, the staff has to make multiple paper copies. Then wrap each copy securely and either FedEx them if the classification is lower, or if higher, use couriers to hand-carry them to each equity-owning agency for review. After a long wait, the process is reversed and after the staff receives the copies back, has to match all the different decisions onto a public release copy.

If there are five equities in the document, staff are making, mailing, and tracking five packages. Once those packages are eventually returned, they're collating all the various decisions. Worse, top secret documents can't be sent by mail or FedEx. Couriers and Defense Department planes and cars have to be used to move those documents for long distances to receive the declassification review that they need. A secure network connectivity at the secret and top-secret level is critical to reduce costs, to reduce time waste and to improve efficiency. Digital records pose many of the same challenges - except they have to first be printed to paper to be sent to agencies for review.

We also had another recommendation to rethink the way declassification programs operate. The Board advocated for prioritization in its 2014 supplemental report, "Setting Priorities: An Essential Step in Transforming Declassification." We continue to recommend prioritization as a coordinated Government-wide approach to declassifying information based on those records that are most sought after and most have the most historical significance and are of most interest to the public.

We think this approach will be most effective for born-digital records. Agencies will have the ability to use metadata and advanced technology to aid search and declassification. We believe that the National Declassification Center, if it's equipped with advanced technologies and secure network connectivity, is in the best position to design and implement a process to solicit, evaluate, prioritize, and sponsor topics with declassification Government-wide in consultation with the public, historians and researchers, government agencies and the Congress.

Again, I don't mean to beat it too much, but in my view, an intelligent and efficient declassification of Congressional Committee records would certainly serve us all well. Hopefully, this will be part of any design and implementation of the process. We recognize the challenges of establishing effective priorities and satisfy the widely varied needs and interests of researchers, the public, the Congress, and government agencies. We know it's not simple. It's going to require effort and executive level decisions.

Priorities, however, should strike a balance, a balance between Federal records, Presidential records, and records from Congressional committees. We allow the public and the stakeholders in determining priorities, that's going to be critical to the success of a priority-based review, and it will strengthen the credibility of a federated, a National Declassification System. Jamie?

Judge Baker:

Yes. I got the message. I was being muted. People have tried that for years and it seems to work. Ken, do you have control again? Thank you, John. Well done. Thank you for putting Congressional records on the table as well. They are often overlooked. Our next speaker is Alyssa Starzak, who most recently of the many jobs she's held in Government was General Counsel of the Army. Alyssa.

Ms. Starzak:

Thanks, Jamie. For the record, I would never mute you. Thank you to everyone for joining today. I want to say it's Board members and on such an important set of issues. I think the thing that we've all focused on here is the reality that the current system that we have for classification and declassification is just simply outdated. The reality is that we've had an explosion of digital records and our processes for managing them do not work and cannot keep up. The challenge that we have, when we look at the classification system, the Government has not tried to rethink how to design a system to manage such an explosive volume of classified digital data. For that reason, one of our recommendations was that the Government really needed entirely new metrics to understand what we were dealing with and how we work and use data in this digital space.

Another important challenge is that there is no accurate measure or metric for determining what the costs are for the classification and declassification system. We do not know the cost for the current system and we have not started to think about what the costs will be in a digital environment. The Government needs solid criteria for determining what the cost of maintaining classification is across agencies. It has to be consistent. It has to be a set of metrics that you can actually measure how much agencies are maintaining classification based on a line item cost. Then you can compare and find efficiencies and waste.

Our recommendation to reconsider metrics and measures, including costs, is a critical need to start reenvisioning and modernizing the system. One of the big challenges in our report is that, while we all have a general understanding that over-classification is bad for the public, we don't often actually talk about the added costs of maintaining too many classified records. The ability of putting a number on what that long-term cost looks like will actually add accountability. We need line-item budgeting, then you can look at long-term costs and see the inefficiencies over time and how they get worse.

I think what often happens when you look at the need to declassify records, it's very easy to push off those costs and simply say, "we don't have the money to put in systems now. It's too expensive over a short period. We don't have the money to do it." This thinking fails to recognize the long-term cost of maintaining classified records. The first step in that process is having a line item that addresses the cost of classification, declassification, storage and safeguarding and systems. From our standpoint, once you have that line item and you're able to compare, you then can find inefficiencies and also identify and map costs out for the longer term. If you can reduce costs by creating better systems, there'll be actually a long-term incentive to do it.

The report also focuses on simplifying the classification system for all the good reasons that Ken and John had suggested, and the problem of over-classification. There is a public interest component when too much is classified. There is an access to records problem inside the government. There is a cost piece that the public, Congress and even agencies themselves have an interest in. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to transition to working at home. But because we are unable to access classified information, the less we have accessible to do our work. It makes decision-making harder and less accurate if we do not have all the information we need. Without overclassification, this would be much less of a challenge.

Our classification system is also now needlessly too complicated . As we did in our earlier report, we continue to recommend simplifying the classification system. The current three-tier classification system of Top Secret, Secret, and Confidential for more than 60 years. But today, at a practical level though, if you're actually inside of government, there are only two classified systems to use - one at the Secret level and one at the Top Secret level. The Intelligence Community has almost abandoned use of Confidential. And, given the design of systems, there is no longer a need for a third level that is rarely used and not supported by a system. Neither does the Government clear its personnel at the "Confidential" level. Deleting this level will allow the Government to re-think standards of classification that align with today's modern work environment which requires rapid flow of information electronically and today's multi-faceted threat environment that is no longer monolithic.

There is no separate confidential system, even though we maintain a separate confidential designation. I noted that the IC has stopped using Confidential and the Information Security Oversight Office reported that there are fewer than ten original classification authorities with just Confidential authority. They reported that this number continues to decrease year after year. Yet the Government is still holding on to this legacy.

I think our view is that if you can look at what is considered confidential information, evaluate it, and either declassify it, decide to no longer classify it, treat it as Controlled Unclassified Information, or classify it at the Secret level. Ideally, this would occur after the Government has reevaluated the definitions of Secret and Top Secret so they are more precise and focus more on harm rather than the current nebulous term, damage. Simplification will improve the classification process overall. The biggest piece that we're looking at in this entire report is that the entire system of classification and declassification really needs a complete overhaul. The Board's role in pushing an overhaul is really important. We can do a lot to encourage the public, the Congress and the Executive branch to consider what should be happening in Government because this is an area that, although very important to our national security and our democracy, doesn't get enough attention. With that, I'll turn it back over to Jamie.

Judge Baker:

Thank you very much, Alyssa for that very helpful presentation. We now are going to turn to the last member here today. This is Admiral Bill Studeman. I've known Bill since 1985. Notice I said, I've known him, but I didn't say he knew me. I first met him by standing at the door and looking in. Over the years, I slowly made my way up to be a backbencher. I finally made it to this table where Bill Studeman

was sitting all along. Boy, was it worth it! Bill is a great public servant as exemplified by the fact that he served on this Board in one capacity or another for 14 years.

No one has been as dedicated to the topic of declassification and classification reform than Bill Studeman. You can agree or disagree with his particular proposals, but you cannot disagree with his commitment. It is evident. Bill, it's been a great honor to finally make it to the table with you. Having made it to the table, I'm now getting thrown off. It's been a joy. I want to thank you on behalf of the Board - and you've served so honorably. Bill Studeman, you're batting cleanup today.

Adm. Studeman:

Thanks, Jamie. Good morning to all. Let me just say what others have said. It has been one of the honors and pleasures of my life to actually have served on this Board. The people that are on the Board and obviously the staff at the ISOO who are beyond reproach and some of the most amazing people I've worked with in Government. We have about ten minutes left in this session. I would like to do a couple of things to focus where we are. Since I'm 14 years long serving on the PIDB, I can remember the early days when we held our meetings at the Archives and invited all the various agency declassification program managers. We were introducing those members to each other.

I didn't know many of them but had collaborated with a few on historical studies. But we've come a long way since then. Of course, the PIDB has produced major reports along the way. The last of which is this Vision report, which we hope can provide a blueprint for actions needed for modernization. I would also like to talk about a few other major events over these last 14 years. First, while many think of records as "paper" or electronic records as "e-mail," technology use goes extensively beyond that. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency holds decades of digital data related to environmental matters. We made a foray over there and took a look. They picked up the cudgel, added their research director and have now advanced their program to deal with 'classes' of records rather than individual ones.

Early on, we understood that technology (or the lack of it) in performing declassification review was a major problem. We knew that, with the exponential growth of digital data, the current system was going to fail. We also were realistic about the fact that - no hit on NARA, but this area was not one of their strengths. They were focused on developing a strategy to deal with electronic records for its own purposes. Its efforts to deal with classified digital records and technology to manage them remains a struggle. New policies to

support use of advanced technologies to aid search and declassification is essential.

In 2015 and 2016, we established the declassification technology working group and met quarterly. It included many declassification program managers from a wide array of agencies - IIC, Defense, military, foreign policy, law enforcement, and the Department of Energy. We tried to benchmark where we were with regard to records. Even back then, we recognized that the records from Desert Storm, the first all-digital war, were already 25 years old and subject to automatic declassification. Yet, the Government was not prepared to review them. In the context of the technology working group, we identified critical weaknesses and the need for technology. Still, there were a few agencies that recognized the need for new processes and new technologies.

The CIA partnered with the University of Texas and their Center for Content Understanding to develop programs to support automated declassification. The Department of Energy used contractors to develop tools that used inference to support declassification and identification of still-sensitive information. We recognize that DOE had the full power of the national laboratory system. The labs have great experience managing and using IT - advanced IT - and work within classified systems.

NGA, as I've already talked about, has taken up the cudgel in the non-textual area and they are seeking new methods to improve classification and declassification of their digital data. The IC has both understanding and experience applying technologies. To us, they seem far ahead of everybody else.

The IC is also far ahead of the rest of the Federal Government in designing and implementing a classified federated information technology system to improve IC integration. The Intelligence Community Information Technology Enterprise is no longer a concept. It took extensive coordination, budget and other resources, and DNI leadership. It is operational and supports national security missions across the IC. The Department of Defense is struggling to get its Federated information system off the ground. IC leadership and the success of ICITE led us to recommend the DNI as the Executive Agent. It was an obvious and unanimous choice for us. But we know from our conversations with them that they are not comfortable taking on this role. They insist they already have a lot on their plate. While they note that this would go beyond their existing authority over the IC, they do have the responsibility for security clearance management across government. They do have

legitimate concerns and are worried about budgetary impacts. That too, was managed across the IC when they were developing ICITE.

This is an issue that must be worked out. I have to say that since we talked to them about the management approach. The issue here is not that they have to do it, but that they have to have it done. The DNI can build a strong governance process for getting it done. That would also address the resource issues and the collective resource issues. They could work out the complex issues on federated and integrated aspects as it relates to the National Declassification Center and the overall system architectures that are required.

The technology area is really important. It is a critical part of organizing for success. It must be closely coordinated among agencies and who are part of our proposed National Declassification System. We recommend that the DNI serve as Executive Agent, with roles for NARA, with roles for the National Declassification Center itself, and other agencies. I'd note that IT modernization cannot be done by solely the government. This must be done cooperatively with the private sector.

DOE has shown the way. This is an issue where contracting must play a critical role. But ICITE is a second example where agencies and contractors developed and built the federated system. These partnerships have solutions in the areas of automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning, all the different kinds of inference related programs. All of these technologies would be required in order to move to a much more modernized and semi-automated and fully automated declassification.

Again, I think this is an important thing, if not the DNI as the Executive Agent who? An executive agent is obviously required. I think that this is a very important recommendation. Let me just make some final comments since we're running down on time. I think it's very important that the national security community, those people who do classification and declassification take responsibility. They have to take responsibility for the handling and ultimate declassification of permanent records and particularly the secrets that they are holding in trust for the American people.

In order to do this mission, the major agencies who classify lots of information must appreciate their work. They must include classification and declassification as part of their fundamental mission. They have to consider it this way. All these agencies have a stake here in the context of the roles and missions of the intelligence community. Other agencies also have a major role in making a determination about what the declassification system

looks like, benchmarking it, developing the metrics and that sort of thing.

The American public has a role to play - and that includes the Sunshine civil society organizations who have followed our work since we started in 2006. The declassifiers in the IC community, in my view, try to do their best to rise to the challenges here that we have laid out in this report. But the way forward requires a new path with new policies and technologies, and it requires leadership. Jamie and all my fellow members, let me stop there and you can go to Steve Aftergood, I think we're on time.

Judge Baker:

Thank you very much, Bill. Before turning to Steve Aftergood for comments, I just wanted to call again on Trevor Morrison. Thank you, Bill. I'm now calling on Trevor Morrison for a wrap up comment before turning to Steve Aftergood.

Mr. Morrison:

Thanks, Jamie. I just wanted to circle back. I knew that Ken was going to address the Executive Agent point and Admiral Studeman has as well, but I want to reinforce that point. While I don't pretend to speak for all members here, I won't be surprised if we are all agreed on this. In many ways, to me, at least, the creation of an Executive Agent, we spoke to given the authority to move forward the strategic steps of the sort that we are recommending in our report and the responsibility to do that and to be accountable for doing that. That to me actually is the most important recommendation in our report. That's not to denigrate any of the other components in the report, but just think it's exceptionally unlikely to the point of frankly, just being impossible for the government to be able to make progress on these issues unless this recommendation is accepted and an Executive Agent chosen, without an Executive Agent working with an Executive Committee as the report supposes. An Executive Agent needs to have the authority and the responsibility to take the kinds of steps that we've outlined. We do think the DNI is the best choice for the Executive Agent, but that's not to say it would be inconceivable for another choice. The most important thing, though, and the one I wanted to circle back, is that a leader of innovation be designated. Just as Ken said, all of us with experience within the executive branch, understand that that some actor - some agency leader - needs sufficient authority and the responsibility. The recommendations in our report is a significant undertaking and that's certainly the take here. I just wanted to reinforce that point. Jamie, with that, I'll give it back to you.

Judge Baker:

Thank you very much, Trevor. Well said. It is our pleasure to turn the mic over to Steve Aftergood. Everybody on this line knows Steve.

He's with the Federation of American Scientists Project on Government Secrecy, but I like the nomenclature that Wikipedia uses, "critic" And that's good in a democracy. Steve, over to you and thank you for joining us.

Mr. Aftergood:

Thank you very much, Jaime. Several quick points I would like to make. The first one is to say thank you to the board for this report. When you do a report like this, especially with the authors of such stature, you're saying fundamentally that this is an important issue that deserves attention. That is, it's obvious to me...it's less obvious to a lot of other people. I think you're doing a public service just by putting out the support and I just want to express my appreciation. The first, let's say critical point I want to offer has to do with the question of applying technology to the classification and declassification problem.

I think you're certainly right that it's necessary, but we're not really interested in technology for its own sake. We're interested in technology to achieve improved performance. I think your recommendation could be strengthened if you were able to set performance goals for technology modernization. What is it that we're trying to achieve? For example, if you want it, you could say that within three years, we want to achieve equilibrium in declassification in the sense that we are declassifying as much information as is coming into the system as classified, so that we've reached a steady state. That's a notional goal.

With respect to classification, you could say that within one year, we want all new classified information to be tagged in such a way that it will never require human review and will be automatically, literally automatically declassified unless there is a desire to declassify sooner than scheduled, but those kinds of performance goals will help you assess when your technology is ready to be adopted. It will tell you, what kind of technologies do we need? Do we need a new breakthrough or are we more or less ready to go right now? I think the kind of technologies that you're talking about and that is needed is much less ambitious and much less costly than the intelligence community's ICITE program. I think it's a much simpler, conceptually simpler problem. Performance goals, that's my number one point.

On the question of Executive Agent, I strongly agree that an Executive Agent is necessary to break the impasse that we've been living with for years and decades, but I'm not sure that you've got the model quite right. If you look at the DNI role as Security Executive Agent with respect to security clearances, that Admiral Studeman just mentioned. I mean, security clearances are as complex and as controversial a topic as classification.

The DNI as Security Executive Agent for that area for that topic does not have an executive committee. He doesn't have a committee to work with. I think that the notion of a committee dilutes the authority of the Executive Agent. What the DNI does have as Security Executive Agent is an executive staff. The responsibility for doing the security executive agent functions in security clearances is assigned to the NCSC, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. The DNI doesn't spend much of his time at all, working on security clearance policy. He assigns it to the NCSC.

By analogy, if the DNI has made the Executive Agent for classification policy, I think he would need an executive staff. I think the Information Security Oversight Office is the right entity to serve as the DNI executive staff. I would suggest that ISOO actually be moved to DNI to serve that purpose. As important an agency as the National Archives is, it is not a national security agency. I think ISOO has suffered...has been put at a disadvantage by being located at NARA instead of being in the heart of the national security constellation.

That's my next point. I think the executive agent should be empowered with an executive staff, namely ISOO. I would shy away from the executive committee model, which I think is contrary to the executive agent function. Then the last thing I want to talk about is the over-classification issue that Ken Wainstein highlighted. I think if I counted correctly, the report mentions over-classification eight times, although the solution to it is beyond the scope of its recommendations.

When I read about it, I think like many readers of the report, I nod and say, "Yes, over-classification." I think there is, as the report said, widespread agreement that over-classification is a problem. I think that agreement is actually quite superficial. As soon as you try to identify an example of a subject of an area that is over-classified, you will find somebody who says, "Wait a minute, that's not right."

"It's properly classified," starting with the agency that classified it. The consensus of opinion about the problem of over-classification disintegrates pretty quickly as soon as you get into specifics. What that means is that what we really have is widespread disagreement about the need for classification in many different cases. That in turn says to me that what we need are new forums for adjudicating those disagreements. Right now, it's the classifying agency who gets the last word. We let the classifier say whether or not their classification decision was necessary. We have very few places where we can overturn or override those decisions.

I think that is something that is still sorely needed because the problem that gives rise to a public skepticism or frustration with classification is not so much a process problem. It's not that the system is not as efficient as we would like it to be. It's that people find themselves in disagreement with the criteria for what is being classified or what is not being declassified. We need new ways to discuss and argue over what the proper criteria are. I wouldn't want to say that everybody who is requesting declassification is always right or that every agency who is refusing to declassify is always wrong, but I think both sides are sometimes right, and sometimes wrong.

We need new ways to think through those disagreements. We need to discuss what the real threats to national security are. What is a tolerable degree of risk to accept? Who should decide? In fact, I could imagine a future for a reconstituted Public Interest Declassification Board, in which the Board plays a much more of an executive role in trying to resolve some of the specific disagreements, subject to a White House override. The Board should, I think, be asked to try to resolve these kinds of disagreements.

Anyway, let me wrap up there and just express my thanks again for this opportunity and for the work that you've done. I think as we approach the end of this presidential term and a possible new administration, I think there will be lots of opportunities for you as individuals and for the board as an entity to press this issue forward and to give the country the benefit of your insight. Thanks again.

Judge Baker:

Thank you very much, Steve, for your thoughtful comments. I appreciate that you were specific in the comments giving both the audience and the board real issues, tangible issues to consider and debate and digest. Let me ask the members of the board, or the NARA team, whether they'd like to comment on any of Steve's comments, either those relating to technology, the executive agent thought. Mark Bradley, you may want to comment on where you're going to move to work.

Mr. Bradley:

I knew you were going to ask me that.

Judge Baker:

Yes, and the over-classification issue. Here, I would say before anybody either volunteers or doesn't volunteer, the board members obviously are going to be speaking in their individual capacities, not as the Board, since we're not in a position to coordinate our responses. If I can encourage Mark to comment, he will be speaking, if he speaks, in his personal capacity and then in an uncoordinated, that sounds funny, in a private manner albeit in a public forum. Are

there any board members who would like to comment on what Steve has said?

Ms. Starzak: Jamie, this is Alyssa. I'm happy to comment on a couple of them.

Judge Baker: Please.

Ms. Starzak: I want to actually talk about a few of them. I think that Steve's point on the fact any technology that we put in place should have targets, should have performance goals is actually I think really important. It's something that we have to think through what that would look like. That may be contingent on what the technology is and exactly what the government is trying to accomplish from it. I think that there are still a fair number of steps in this process. But I agree that it's something that we absolutely have to look at and should continue to look at it as a Board. I'm not going to touch the Executive Agent issue. I'll let Mark talk to that.

On the over- classification piece, I think one of the things that we were thinking about in the idea of prioritizing declassification was having mechanisms to actually pick topics that could then move forward potentially for declassification. I think one thing that we can look at in that space is given that those are potentially topics that are now priority topics, to the extent that there is disagreement about what kinds of content should be declassified, there may actually be a mechanism to create a forum in that space. I guess one thing that we should think about as a board, again, in a forward-looking way is to think about whether prioritization can serve as the forum that Steve recommended in that context. I'll turn it back over to you, Jamie.

Adm. Studeman: This is Bill. As we know, the NDC has a list of topics for consideration in this regard. I think it's very important that we go back to that list.

Congressman Tierney: Jamie, this is John Tierney. I would just highlight that. I thought Steven's comments on the idea of over-classification and the disagreements that arise out of that needs much more attention. If that's something the board has the authority to do, I think it's a good idea. I think that is a good starting point for a lot of the issues that we talk about, the overburdening of the system. It does get to the root of one of those problems. I think that the Board should at least address whether or not we have the authority to do that, then whether or not we have the bandwidth to undertake something like that.

Mr. Morrison: This is Trevor, let me-- could I just express a strong agreement with that point. I thought Steve was quite compelling and what he said about the nature of the problem of over-classification. I think he's

right, that there is a thin consensus around over-classification being a problem that evaporates as soon as we focus on individual instances of potential over-classification, and then pretty significant substantive disagreements arise right away. That's the challenge that we're all aware of. I agree with John that as I'm about to leave the board, I think it makes complete sense for the board to do what it can to focus attention on that particular dimension of the problem, but the front end as it were.

Judge Baker:

Thank you, Trevor. I would join in. I love the specific performance goals idea. I would encourage those who are on the phone to immerse themselves in the new AI technologies already in use. Law firms are using them for discovery now. There were some pilot projects in the classification area that we have referred to in the report that we thought were very promising. I would encourage those who are listening who aren't familiar with these technologies yet - before forming a view as to whether it's a good idea, bad idea, what the performance goals are or should be - to take a look at the technologies.

Some are quite sophisticated. They are, in fact, quite reliable because of metadata and tagging. Classification and declassification is something that AI actually should do quite well. I would also agree on the over-classification issue. I note that Steve, I don't know if this was purposeful, but I thought it was wise to drop a footnote to your proposal about differences and disagreements and using other forums and allowing the White House to override.

I think what you want to do or what one might want to do is avoid a scenario where presidential lawyers will immediately reject anything that appears to put ultimate authority of over-classification into somebody's hands, other than the President, Chief Executive and Commander in Chief. I think you would be wise to avoid that issue and having it be rejected out of hand, by building in some sort of a consultative mechanism or indication of ultimate authority. Now, I know Congress may have different views about that, but that's a forecast you'll get when you go to the executive branch regardless of party.

I think Steve's comments about over-classification is basically correct. But I think one area where there's probably more agreement than meets the eye on over-classification is on timelines. This notion that everything is either 25 years or forever or some others or specific review I think, we reasonable people may disagree whether a particular document or idea or a thought or issues should be classified, but we might well agree that it needed to be classified after five years where it needed to be classified after a more finite

time that period of time other than 25 years. I might look at that. I know we have a lot of questions that have come in.

Mr. Bradley:

Jamie, this is Mark. Can I speak to the ISOO comments. First of all, I want to thank Steve for the question. I've known him since the late '90s when I was Senator Moynihan's legislative director, and I've always had the highest regard for Steve and also his opinion and views. They are always thoughtful and provocative. Two thoughts, one is yes, there's no doubt about it that ISOO is cached or we are in the agency that is not the best funded. That said, I think our real strength has always been on independence. I would worry about being put under the tent and the tent, so to speak, of the IC.

I don't know what that would do to our neutrality. If I could speak just as Mark Bradley, American citizen, one of the things that I worry about most is having intelligence and national security information politicized. I think if we serve any valuable role at all, I think that we're... that I'm the umpire behind the plate that is not in either camp. Our goal is to help agencies declassify as much information as they can and release it to the public just as, at the same time, help agencies focus on protecting what needs to be protected. Again, it's a very provocative idea. I would love to have the money. I'm just not sure you know, depending on who's the DNI what our marching orders might be. I value my independence and I value my neutrality.

Judge Baker:

Right. Thank you, Mark, for your... I don't want to overstate it, but your courage actually saying something on that topic in your personal capacity. This is very helpful as people go forward and digest this idea and contemplate how to implement it. We have a number of questions. I don't know if we will get to all of them, but I can report that all questions will be posted on the ISOO blog. Mark, I think you have the questions, is that fair to say?

Mr. Bradley:

No, it's Robert Fahs of my staff. Robert, can you please read them out?

Mr. Fahs

Yes, of course. Can you hear me?

Judge Baker:

Yes.

Mr. Fahs:

Robert Fahs. I'm reading the questions in the order that they were received. First question, what changes would you like to see included in the Executive Order to relieve the burden of automatic declassification?

Judge Baker: Robert, since I had the opportunity to see the first two questions before they sent, then why don't you read the next question as well because I think they might be a pair?

Mr. Fahs: The second question is: how would the PIDB suggest ideas on how to prioritize the significant classified records and reduce the backlogs in declassification.

Judge Baker: One of my roles - or perhaps main role- will be to distribute questions, but since I had the opportunity to see these two in advance since the people posed them were kind enough to give us advance warning and therefore I subjected them to five years of innovation due process before speaking I'll take the first stab. Then I'll let any other board members chime in. The first question had to do with the EO requirement for automatic declassification of 25-year-old records and what we'd change to alleviate the burden of this requirement.

What I would do is combine the two and say, "Let's focus on records that are of the highest interest, either as public value interest or historical value interests and spend less time on 25-year-old records and more time on priority records." With respect to 25-year-old records, I would apply more risk management to this process as well. I think the older the records get, the less sensitive they become - although not uniformly so. One has to think of Manhattan Project or something like that to say not all records that are 25 years old should automatically be thrown out the door, but I would be prepared to have more risk management applied to an older record of 25 years.

I think the key point is to orient the system to topics of great interest to the public or to historians and researchers. Here, different people can have different ideas. I think one's support for an idea, or ultimately that comes down to it - is you have a seat at the table. I would note that there are historians in every major government agency and they are quite credible and good ones. The historian of the department of state, the CIA history staff - they are awesome. DOE has a history office. You could have them serve as either an advisory board or as actual decision-makers in suggesting topics of historical interest for prioritized declassification review.

You could also have some on an advisory board. Perhaps an advisory board made up of academic institutes and institutions, such as the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians. Then if you want to get clever, you could also put on groups like the Council on Foreign Relations and things like that. I think there's a space for more creativity to do what John Tierney was talking about, which is become more topical and put more of

the resources not on 25-year-old documents, but on historically important documents. That's my response. Would any other member care to comment or we can move to the next questions.

Adm. Studeman:

This is Bill. It's an extremely complicated area, the risk management tools that are out there, the government does not really use or have them in the Intel community. The complexities are great and the great fear on the part of the people that deal with classification has to do with entanglement of quite sensitive issues rather than the more mundane issues that could reasonably be considered for automatic declassification at 25 years. Fundamentally, I think this is a handling problem. We had classification as one issue. Handling is another. There are often handling subscripts that I don't think we really make it profitable to use. There are some process things here I think we can also do.

Judge Baker:

Okay, Robert. Thank you, Bill. Robert, why don't you read the next question?

Mr. Fahs:

We've got a pretty long comment. I'll synthesize it but it will be included in full on the blog. I hope I'm getting to the essence of the comment, which states the problem that PIDB should study and recommend solutions for is not over-classification, but under-declassification when records were improperly marked from the beginning. MDR [Mandatory Declassification Review] and FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] reviewers, who often do not declassify records when they should. The PIDB should stop the study of over-classification and instead focus on the decisions of declassifiers in these processes and the degree to which it affects declassification decisions and then propose solutions to the problems.

Judge Baker:

Thank you. Since it was a comment and not a question, we will undertake it at the PIDB to take a look at the comment. We will look at all of the other comments and will also post them. Robert, why don't you focus on the questions?

Mr. Fahs:

Yes, absolutely. Next question. The report addresses the need for additional resources, especially at NARA. What advice do you have for NARA leadership to try to secure those resources? Do you see supportive partnerships at the White House, in Congress, and in industry?

Adm. Studeman:

Sorry, you're just going to list the questions.

Judge Baker: Why don't you give us a couple of questions and then we'll offer them to the Board in a smorgasbord manner, given the time we have?

Mr. Fahs: Cool. Moving onto the next question. Overall, the report called for action that is long overdue. Can you elaborate more on the recommendation to enhance the role of the NDC? As it is a National Center, do you think it could potentially benefit from learning more about other National Centers, such as the National Counterterrorism Center on how to lead a government program more effectively?

Judge Baker: Give us two more questions please, Robert.

Mr. Fahs: Is there any consideration being given to enabling a researcher to submit MDR requests and appeals electronically directly to NARA on electronic media? Here are three questions from one person - or rather, two questions and a comment. I'll read the question. Will the public be able to learn what records are undergoing declassification reviews and the results? Will there be changes in how the public accesses the declassified records?

Judge Baker: Let's take a pause for a moment. We have five questions on the deck. How would we recommend to NARA to get more money for this role? Please comment on the NDC's role as well as what it might learn from the other National Centers. I'm not quite sure I heard properly the next question, which had to do with electronic access to NARA records. Then there were two other questions involving knowing about the outcome of declassification reviews and results and access to declassified documents. Any board members wish to address any of those please in the rapid-fire round with a one-minute answer.

Congressman Tierney: Jamie, this is John Tierney. I'm happy to dive into the first question. Look, I, obviously, you're talking about money, so you're talking about Congress to appropriate the money. That's going to always be a struggle and a fight, but there are partnerships in Congress, particularly among those people that are involved in oversight. There is the general oversight committee in the Senate and in the House. There are oversight subcommittees on most of the committees. I think there are natural allies. They have to see the value of what we're trying to do here and to get them on board. That would be a good starting place to really try to get that ball moving and press upon them what the impact would be on their constituents, the public at large, but also the need to have it done for national security issues as well as cost issues.

Judge Baker: Thank you. Very helpful answer. One thing I'll note, since we are up against time limitations and the people have put in the questions,

maybe frustrated that they don't get the deluxe answer. I will tell you that the PIDB will take all these questions back to the conference room. Obviously, I can't make promises since I'm getting off the board. Not only will they take them back to the conference room, they'll write 40-page memos on each and send them back to the questions, but what I will say, they all will be considered and thought better by the PIDB and the NARA team whether they get a full answer at this time or not. Any other takers on that first five rounds of questions?

Mr. Wainstein:

Jamie, this is Ken. I'll jump in and give you my verbal version of my 40-page memo right now. The question of what we can learn from the other centers in the government. I think that's good advice. I've been working with the NCTC since it was founded. I'm on their advisory board. I think they've gone through a lot of what will happen in this effort. Just thinking of the challenges, trying to merge different cultures from different agencies on a common objective, which the NCTC had to do. If the NCTC can be successful in getting the FBI and CIA to work together, then they must know something that they can convey. They can give advice about how to bring in different cultures and how to get them work in the same direction.

Obviously, they have had to merge systems and make sure the systems can speak to each other. They've looked at the legacy systems from the different parts of the intelligence community and got it all working. They've merged personnel. The whole notion of the NCTC is to bring personnel in from all the different component agencies, focus on the counterterrorism mission, and get them working together and sharing information. That's been a huge success.

I think the last thing that they could give us guidance on is how to survive in their bureaucratic trench warfare because whenever there's an allocation of resources or emphasis or focus or personnel from some number of agencies or authority to a different entity, there is always the danger of bureaucratic reaction. The NCTC has done a very good job dealing with that. Good advice. I think that that would be a great place to go to get some guidance.

Adm. Studeman:

This is Bill. These consolidated centers like the NCTC, cyber centers, et cetera, are mission-focused narrowly on specific areas and event by event. One of the interesting things to consider is, if you can move the whole issue of classification and declassification more to an event by event animated context, it might actually throw some dynamics into the system that we hadn't considered before.

Judge Baker: Thank you, Ken, and thank you, Bill, thoughtful answers. NARA team, do we have time for two more questions or not?

Mr. Bradley: Sure. Jamie, go ahead.

Judge Baker: Robert, give two more rapid fire questions please.

Mr. Fahs: One question is about moving ISOO to ODNI - isn't that a conflict of interest? Are there ramifications for placing ISOO in proximity with classifiers and equity holders themselves? Does it send more of a message of information integrity?

Judge Baker: That's a good question. I think Mark Bradley has addressed it in part and he spoke about his concern about independence. Please, read two more.

Mr. Fahs: For Mr. Aftergood. Is Mr. Aftergood arguing for a much more robust ISCAP [Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel]? Is he aware of Section 1.8 of the order? I agree that sensitivity, including classified information, decreases over time for historic records, just curious, and would like more elaboration from Steve. The rest are more common, I think.

Judge Baker: Let's go with Steve Aftergood if he could respond to that and then we'll do the closing out.

Mr. Aftergood: ISCAP lacks the capacity to handle more than a small number of cases per year, a dozen or two documents. Its findings don't propagate out into the larger system. It's one venue. Another is the classification challenge process, which is pretty robust in a few agencies but totally missing in lots of other agencies. There are cases where information is properly classified, but nevertheless should be made public. There are cases like that. There's no venue for deciding when there's a good enough public interest reason to compel disclosure and the kind of thing I'm really interested in. Anyway, thank you.

Mr. Fahs: I think that's it for the questions.

Judge Baker: Thank you, Steve, and thank you to the participants for your comments. They will be reviewed with care. Now, I'm going to turn the mic over to Mark Bradley, please.

Mr. Bradley: Thanks, Jamie. Just quickly, we have some members of the board whose terms are ending. What we would like to do is to thank them. We have a gift for them, which is secure in our building. As soon as the building is safe for us to go back, we will see that they get it. Let me start by thanking Judge Jamie Baker. Jamie was appointed by President Obama in 2016. He brought a wealth of experience from

his service as the National Security Council Legal Advisor, serving in the Department of State, serving in the military as a reservist and on Capitol Hill as chief of staff for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

I especially want to thank him for serving as acting Chair since 2018 and for carrying this report that we're discussing today across the finish line. I, myself, have always enjoyed Jamie's leadership, intellect coupled by his keen sense of humor, even playful at times. Next, I want to thank Trevor Morrison. Trevor was also appointed by President Obama in 2016. He served in the White House Counsel Office and at the Department of Justice. And he remains very busy - now as the Dean of the NYU Law School. He served as our chair from 2016 to 2018, and led the charge into researching and starting this report.

Trevor always kept the meetings focused and despite his own brilliance, always listened first. He's a true gentleman, and it's been a pleasure to work with him. Next, Laura de Bonis, who could not be here today due to last-minute conflict. She was appointed by President Obama in 2015. Although she had never served in the government, her technology and private sector perspectives were refreshing and welcome. Along with Admiral Studeman, she co-chaired the technology working group, which played such a pivotal cornerstone role in preparing the report that we have in front of us.

Lastly, I want to thank Admiral Bill Studeman who had extraordinary service, not only to us, but to the United States. I don't think I've ever met anyone who has been so thoughtful in seeking entirely new solutions to challenges and who also continues to be so much ahead of his time. For us, he recognized immediately the need for modernizing the system. He's been involved, had his hand and heart in this from the PIDB's beginning. And he has played a pivotal role in all four of our reports to the president of the United States.

Bill, you are unique. We will be calling on your counsel from time to time. You can be assured that. On behalf of the ISOO staff, which supports the board, it's been a real honor and pleasure. Here you all are such nice people, such dedicated patriots, and you're taking this seriously that has made our job so much easier and so much more pleasurable. Again, thank you all. Jamie.

Judge Baker:

Mark, on behalf of the outgoing board members, thank you very much for your kind words. Thank you for telling us that we can come to the Archives to get our gifts, which is our choice of any original document from within the Archives. I think that's what you said. We would like to thank the NARA and PIDB staff, both past and present. I think the audience will pick up on the fact that in a pretty grueling

area of bureaucratic work, we have found great camaraderie and a great commitment to public service, both on the board and on the staff.

That's really what has kept this operation going forward. We do want to thank the staff, each one of us and as a board, so thank you very much. Thank you. It is now my pleasure - and I say that in many different ways - to introduce the next vice chair and therefore acting chair of the PIDB, Alyssa Starzak. Alyssa will serve as the acting chair going forward. Welcome and thank you. Thank you for volunteering to do this, and the floor is yours.

Ms. Starzak:

Thank you, Jamie. I can't live up to your description, your comments at the beginning or Trevor's comments or Mark's appreciation of all of you. I don't know that there's that much more to say. I can only hope that we can do something that follows in your footsteps in some way. I can say that I don't think that they're going to let you walk off with the Constitution. Just for the record, the Board does not support that. I don't think we voted on that.

I actually do want to talk a little bit about where we stand on this report. Our view is that the report is really the first step in going down a long road. We think, as aboard, there is a lot of work to continue to do as we advocate to modernize the classification system and to find new ways to more efficiently identify, review, declassify and release to the public important records. That is to release the right records in a timely way. I think we heard that with a question. I think the board has a lot of work to do to follow up. We want to commit to being able to do that. We'll continue to look at additional steps that we can take based on the feedback that we've received. We'll try to do a good job digesting the comments, even if we don't write 40-page responses. I think that we've definitely have our work cut out for us.

In the same vein though, I also want to point out that the board is really about recognizing the importance of classification and declassification systems. It plays a really important role from that perspective. Although the board was reauthorized, one of the things that we've had in the last few years is actually a bunch of board members leaving without new members coming on. I just want to flag that that is an ongoing issue for us and something that the board will also continue to talk about. We really want to continue to be an operational board, so we're really hoping that new members will be appointed and join in our work.

Then just finally, I want to end with a big thank you to our wonderful departing board members, who've been amazing and really do represent exemplary public service. It's been such an honor to sit

with you in the same room to have conversations about all of these issues. I appreciate your camaraderie and all of the amazing intellect you've brought to these hard problems. And the work of the amazing ISOO staff. With that, I think I will close the meeting. Thank you to everyone who participated. We look forward to another session.

Moderator:

That concludes our conference. Thank you for using AT&T Event Conferencing Enhanced. You may now disconnect.